

Bridgwater-Marsa Twinning Association.

Meeting Monday 28th September 2015.

Present- Mayor Leigh Redman, Steve and Stella Austen, Tricia Brown, Barbara and Gordon Taylor, Joseph Abela, Mike Grabner, Steve and Pat Morgan, Chris Hewitt.

Apologies-Di Grabner, James Morgan and Helmi Holder Wolff as we are told she is in hospital.

MG welcomed all and thanked **Leigh** and the Town council very much for the use of the Parlour which enabled us to have a central place for our meetings. He showed the plaque from Marsa Council that was presented to us by Dominic at the Twinning conference and wondered where it could be shown as there was the one he presented to our then Mayor **SA** was here in the Mayors Parlour.**SA** wondered if it could be presented to the Arts Centre for all the help they had given us. It was suggested that Leigh could present it to them and perhaps could be placed in the bar area where it would be seen by everyone who visited the Arts centre- Leigh accepted and was thanked.

Minutes of the last meeting- Had been received by all.

Report from Chair- **MG** reported back from the last Twinning Forum meeting that the Peoples Choir are planning to go to Malta sometime next year it could be spring or autumn as yet undecided. He thanked **Leigh** and the Town Council for our Core Grant which was given to all the Twinning groups at that meeting. **MG** asked if we wishes to take part in the next Twinning Forum event, the provisional date is 23 rd April 2016 (St Georges Day) the general feeling was that we should.

Report from Secretary- **PM** gave an account of the very busy week that **SM, B, GT and PM** had spent in Malta. We arrived on Thursday and were greeted at the airport by Councillor Dominic Spencer his wife Claudette and their 2 daughters who invited us to a BBQ at their holiday caravan near the coast the following evening. We hired a car on Friday and went to visit the Blue Grotto where we took a boat trip to see all the caves and enjoyed the coolness as it was extremely hot. In the evening we drove out to meet the family where they provided us with a wonderful meal. We were all invited to a neighbouring caravan to enjoy some Maltese Folk Music which after we left carried on until the early hours! **BT** explained that the men were singing to one another and we were given some translation! **JA** explained that he was busy investigating Maltese Folk Music and had found some very interesting books about it written many years ago in German and asked **MG** if he could read German-**MG** said he may be able to. On Saturday we spent part of the day in Valletta and in the evening went to another hotel in Sliema where we attended an end of summer BBQ given by the MP Dr Jose Herra whom we had met several times in the past and greeted us like old friends- we gave him this year's Bridgwater guide which he carried around as he spoke to the couple of 100 people there. Sunday we visited Dingle Cliffs the highest cliffs on the island and had hoped to find Clapham Junction cart tracks but missed them! Instead we found a really good eco restaurant called The Cliffs which sourced local food and had its own garden. In the evening we walked to a feast in Sliema at St Gregory's church which was quite low key in comparison to some we had been to – we saw the saint come away from the church, visited the inside and then walked down to the promenade where it was busy with walkers and saw the procession again. A gentle stroll back to the hotel where we had a drink on the roof and saw the fireworks. On Monday we had a Harbour Cruise where **GT** saw the areas he was based at in the 1960's. In the evening we went to the newly refurbished Royal Opera

House just inside the New City Gates in Valletta and beside the new Parliament building. It was an open air Night of Ballet Under The Stars but it was cloudy! And it rained a tiny amount but once the stage had been dried we enjoyed a lovely evening.

Tuesday was the National Regatta and a national holiday. We travelled into Marsa, parked and walked to see the Bridgwater Play area but were unable to go in and there were workmen emptying the duck pond after major road works. We then drove (a short distance) to Dominic's family home where Claudette cooked lovely Ravioli before we drove down to the Grand Harbour where we were shown to the VIP area where we had shade and were provided with drinks as it was extremely hot **BT** pointed out one evening it was 44 C. We had fun watching the various races and **DS** was able to take **GT** to see the different types of boats in the special enclosure. We had been told that Marsa Boat Club were the favourites and they did extremely well winning both the big shields for the A and B team followed by loud and musical celebrations ! (There is a video on our web site) That evening Mayor Francis and his wife Carmen joined us at the hotel for a drink on the rooftop where we had a spectacular display of lightening! It did rain overnight and we decided to go to the Craft Village the next day where it rained hard! In the evening we had been invited to the Marsa Council Offices which we had not seen in full working order. The large picture we had given the council on the opening of the offices hangs in the main area so any visitors will see it and there are many photo's of the signing both in Bridgwater and Marsa. We meet the Marsa Historical Society members many of whom we have met before and had a very busy time as we had taken much Bridgwater information with us which was gratefully received. We presented them also with a photographic book of Somerset and Raymond Montebello their secretary presented us with a book about James Martin who had left Malta with little education but was very important in the development of Africa after much travelling. **GT** has taken the book to read and it is available for us all to enjoy. We also presented Mayor Francis and Dominic for the council an old Bridgwater Photo of the Cornhill with a description on it as well the Somerset book. We had also given Francis some Bridgwater goods from the Museum that he will give to children who are taking lessons in the computer suite downstairs in the council building which will also be used for adult learners in the winter. The area is also used for other adult education/ yoga etc. Afterwards the Debono family and the Spencer family took us to the Valetta Waterfront where all the liners berth where we were provided with a surprise meal .We said our good byes as leaving in the morning. A very enjoyable week was has by all. **GT** explained he had really enjoyed the Regatta and explained about the different boats and types of rowing.

PM had been in contact with Dave Chapple from the Bridgwater Civic Society before leaving for Malta and had offered to give a talk about our twinning and has now talked to **DS** who will send his part of the talk we gave at the last twinning forum. She is waiting to hear from **DS** and will then contact the Civic Society again.

Our Facebook Page has a new member called Frans Attard who we met at the Historical Society, he is an author and as **BT** pointed out his daughter lives in the South West so he knows the region and would like to visit Bridgwater as does Raymond Montebello.

PM asked if she should order the Poppy Cross for Remembrance Sunday and the answer was yes but **SA** thought there may be some difficulty as the Legion has closed. **PM** will investigate.

PM had also contacted the Arts Centre re Bridgwater has Got Talent and apparently Kate the Artistic director is organising it so I have given **DS** her details as he had asked me to find out a contact so I have given him her e mail address.

Treasurer's Report- SM Thanked Leigh and Bridgwater council for our core grant which we are always grateful for. He has had outgoings of £27 for gifts to take to Marsa and £19 for reprinting of **JA's** business cards which had a spelling mistake. This left a total of £879:33p with only possible other outgoings were for the Poppy Cross and a get well gift for Helmi. As we will soon be having our AGM he will get the accounts audited.

Membership Secretary Report- TB had tried to contact her neighbour who was very interested in coming who thought he was going to Malta later this month but it appears they have gone! She has not seen Danny the teacher from St Mary's School since the term stated, she will try to arrange to see him.**PM** asked what age group he taught and it is Year 5 which are 9-10 year olds. **PM** had offered to give a talk to the class but had not heard.**PM** will contact **DS** again to see if he can contact the teacher in Marsa.

Any Other Business- The next Forum was discussed on 23rd April 2016 .**MG** said it had been discussed and a common theme was decided that in the evening to be music from the different twinned countries. **Stella A** suggested that after their experience in going to UH that perhaps national costume may also be included as the Czech one was so attractive and colourful. **JA** was asked about the Maltese costume and described it. **JA** also wondered if the Tourist side of each country be included to encourage Bridgwater people to travel to their twinned towns/countries. It was also asked what kind of music as **JA** said traditional Maltese music was not too comfortable on the ear. **MG** promised to take these ideas forward to the next Forum meeting which we were expecting soon. It was also discussed where the event should be held, it was overwhelming that the Town Hall/ Charter Hall would have a higher footfall with the Arts Centre for the evening entertainment. **DS** had asked if there was any EU monies to help bring any musicians from Malta to Bridgwater- **PM** will ask Brian Smedley.

JA explained that the Queen will be visiting Malta for the Commonwealth Conference in November; he is visiting in November but not sure if he will be there at the same time. **DS** will be providing some of the security for all the heads of state as will a relative of **JA**.

B and GT explained about a large graffiti seen on a building in Sliema of an immigrant breaking through a wall- you could only see his legs and lower body going through the wall. A local lady stopped as we were taking photos and asked us if we would like to see the other half of the picture She said it was in Italy! It looked very like a Banksy - a reflection of the problems Malta has been having for years with illegal immigrants.

Date of next meeting which will be our AGM

Wednesday 4th November 2015

7.30 hrs at the Mayors Parlour